

Random Encounters

Mind War - Arthes Kren

By Ramon Arjona



Like many children, Arthes had an imaginary friend. He named his imaginary playmate Kern and took him everywhere. When his parents asked Arthes why only he could see this pretend being called Kern, he answered, "Because he lives in my shadow." His mother and father thought this was incredibly cute, until Arthes' shadow began to move independently of their son. As his frightened parents watched, the boy's shadow danced across the floor and turned cartwheels while young Arthes clapped his hands with amusement.

At first, his parents feared that a demonic or divine power might be influencing Arthes. The village priest examined Arthes as a candidate for possible exorcism, but he found no trace of good or evil divine magic in the boy. In fact, he found no trace of magic at all. Sorcerers and wizards examined the boy as well, trying to find an explanation for his seemingly strange powers. All of them were left at a loss. Soon, Arthes's fame grew, and spellcasters of all sorts came from across the world to have a look at the boy for themselves. None of them could devise a satisfactory explanation for the boy's abilities.



In the meantime, Arthes had moved beyond playing with shadows. On dark nights, especially when a storm was raging outside, he would illuminate his bedroom with a light that emanated from his own eyes. He moved small objects by simply wanting them to move. Arthes learned to keep his newfound abilities secret from his parents because they became uneasy when he manifested his talents.

Then one day, a strange sorcerer called Toryn, who had traveled extensively in the Underdark, came to speak with Arthes. He understood that the boy's powers resembled those of the squidlike beings called illithids (also known as mind flayers), who rule the subterranean realms. After meeting Arthes, Toryn no longer believed that the boy had any connection to the illithids -- the young man had a soul that was far too pure for him to have been touched by the mind flayers. (Not to mention, of course, that Arthes had no tentacles.) Toryn shared his limited knowledge of psionics with Arthes, hoping it would help the boy adjust to the world. As one who could naturally use arcane magic, Toryn could sympathize with the boy's feeling of being "different."

Unfortunately, Arthes's notoriety had reached even into the Underdark, and terrible beings focused their attention on the boy. Monstrous creatures descended on his parent's farm, slaughtering everything and everyone they found. Only the heroic effort of Arthes's father, supported by Toryn's powerful magic, allowed the boy to escape the carnage. Everyone else, even Toryn, perished.

Alone in the world, without family or friends, Arthes drifted from place to place. He always tried to hide his powers and keep a low profile. His psionic abilities had brought him nothing but grief throughout his life, and he turned his efforts to the attainment of a single goal: ridding himself of this psionic curse forever.

Arthes Kren: Male human Psion 9 (Savant); CR 9; Medium-size humanoid; HD 9d4+27; hp 49; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 16; Atk +4 melee (1d6, quarterstaff); SA psionic combat modes (*ego whip, id insinuation, mind blast, mind thrust, psychic crush, empty mind, intellect fortress, mental barrier, thought shield*); SQ psionic powers (44 power points/day); AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 14. Height 5 ft. 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Autohypnosis +12, Concentration +15, Disable Device +13, Pick Pocket +15, Psicraft +13, Search +13; Combat Manifestation, Inertial Armor, Inner Strength, Psionic Focus (Psychokinesis), Talented.

Psionic Powers (6/4/3/3/2; save DC 1d20 + power level + ability score modifier for key ability; 15 free 0-level manifestations): 0 -- *control shadow, far hand, far punch, finger of fire, my light, verve*; 1st -- *biocurrent, control object, create sound, matter agitation*; 2nd -- *control air, control body, control flames*; 3rd -- *control sound, greater concussion, negate psionics*; 4th -- *inertial barrier, mass concussion*.

Possessions: Ring of protection +2, gloves of Dexterity +2, quarterstaff.

Arthes is used to living on his own and fending for himself. His Pick Pocket skill frequently supports his need for petty cash. Arthes has the Talented feat, allowing him to manifest 3 more 0-level powers than he otherwise would. This comes in handy when he is using his *control shadow* power to entertain or impress an audience.

Arthes is still wandering the world, searching for something that will rid him of his psionic abilities. He readily uses his powers when nobody is looking, or when he can pass it off as simple sleight-of-hand. He does not, however, readily admit to being a psionist and goes to great lengths to hide the fact that there is anything "special" about him at all.

Introducing Arthes Kren to Your Campaign

- The characters encounter a wandering ascetic, who requests their assistance in exploring a nearby entrance to the Underdark. The ascetic is Arthes Kern, who hopes to find some traces of an illithid settlement he believes was once located in the Underdark of this area. Through the illithid's psionic knowledge, he hopes to find a way to rid himself of his curse forever. He does not readily display his psionic powers, and he attempts to hide his true purpose from the PCs. If hard pressed, he tries to pass himself off as a "sorcerer."
- The characters happen upon a mob, led by a cleric of Hextor, who are attempting to burn a young man at the stake. This young man is Arthes Kern, and, when the PCs investigate, they find that the cleric of Hextor is attempting to destroy him because he is clearly an "agent of chaos." His psionic powers do not fit into any established ideas of magic or reality, therefore he must be eliminated before he can undermine the "natural order of things." Should the characters free Arthes, he explains his psionic talents to them, as well as his quest to be rid of them. Should the characters not choose to free Arthes, he frees himself using a combination of *mass concussion* and *control flames* -- more power than he normally would expend in the presence of witnesses, but his circumstances are clearly desperate.
- Arthes believes that one of the PCs may hold the key to ridding himself of his psionic abilities -- either in a magic artifact they possess or in something they might know. He approaches them discreetly and tries to gain their assistance. If the PCs don't agree to help him, he might try to use force to persuade them.

Bring the Parts Together

Although random encounters usually happen by chance, some DMs may wish to tie these four parts together into something that could lead to further adventures. Future parts of this Random Encounter series will contain brief notes on how to tie them all together.

Coming in Part 2 of Mind War... Discover a lost monastic order.

[Return to Main Page](#)

About the Author

Ramon Arjona is originally from Hawaii. He now lives in Washington State with his wife and two cats. His work has appeared in the *Hawai'i Review*, the *Absinthe Literary Review*, and *Strange Horizons*. He plans to become an 18th-level software developer so that he can get the bonus feats.
